



Regulation Made Real:

Classroom Strategies and Tools That Support Students



Let's Get Ready for Learning



Session Overview

Emotional regulation impacts all learners. This session will help you:

- Build a toolbox of practical regulation strategies
- Think proactively about support and environment
- Foster independence in regulation skills



What is Emotional Regulation?

*Emotional regulation is adapting
emotional responses to context
while maintaining balance*

An Emotional Regulation Approach...

- We prioritize **emotional regulation** over **compliance**.
- When individuals are regulated, they can **learn, grow, and thrive**.
- Our work is grounded in **relationships**, not control.



Dysregulation is a continuum: from mild irritation or frustration to full-blown meltdown or shutdown...



*Factors that
impact
Emotional
Regulation...*



sensory differences



physiological challenges



mental health challenges and/or
trauma



cognitive differences



*A square peg forced into
a round hole damages
the peg, not the hole.*



Safe Management Group

Your path to a safer workplace

- A crisis intervention training program developed in 1990
- Children's Autism Services is a licensed provider
- Relationship building and prevention

SMG and Emotional Regulation (ER) in the classrooms

Environmental preparation

Enviro-scan process

Regulation profile

Focus on prevention



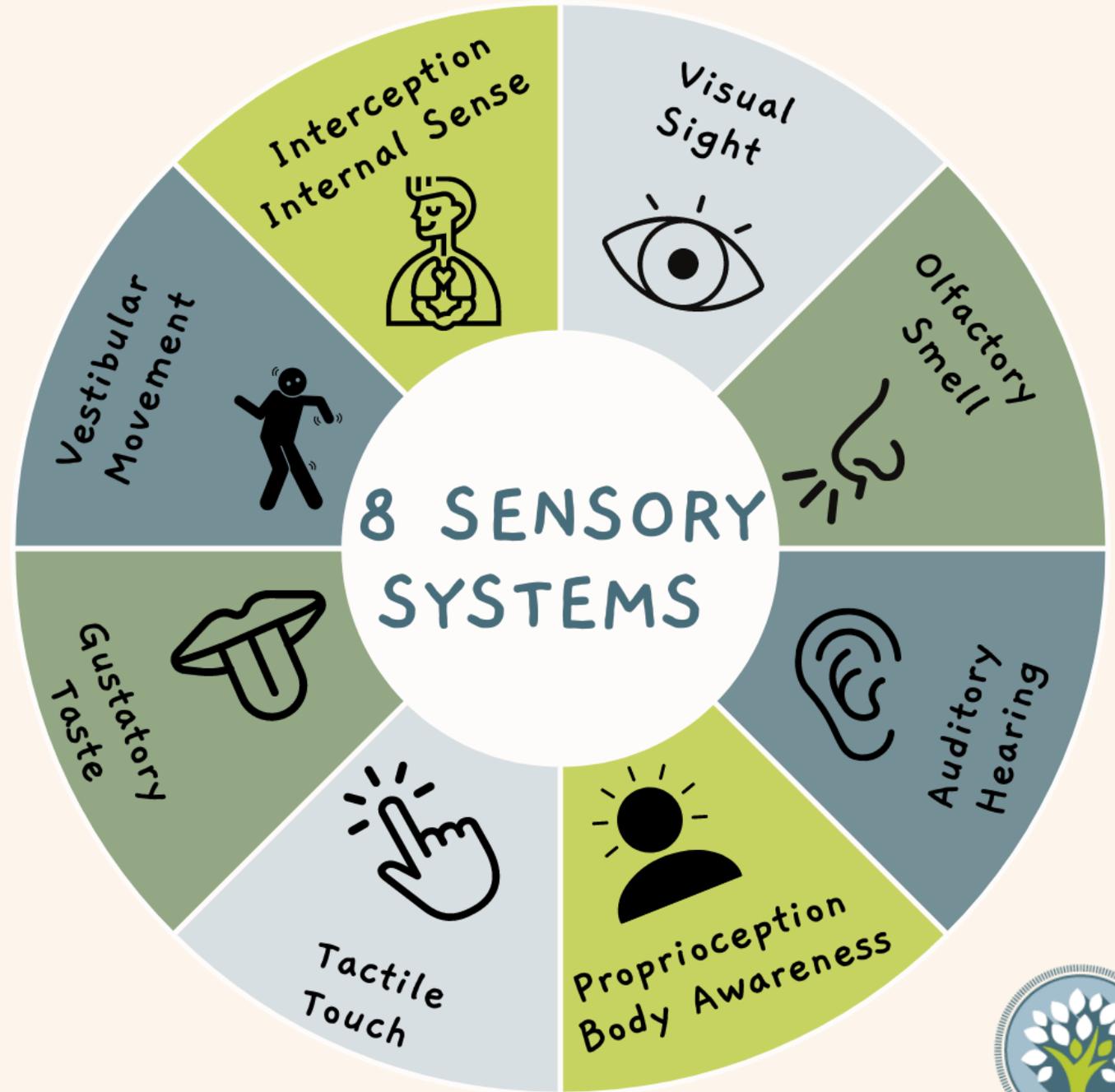
Be a Stress Detective

- Find stressors → Reduce them
- Find unmet needs → Meet them
- Find skill deficits → Teach them



Consider Sensory Needs

- Touch (Tactile)
- Sight (Visual)
- Hearing (Auditory)
- Taste (Oral)
- Smell (Olfactory)
- Balance and Coordination (Vestibular)
- Muscle and Joint Awareness (Proprioception)
- Brain-Body Connection (Interoception)





Brain Break (a pause)



4 Levels of a Break

Proactive Supports for Regulation

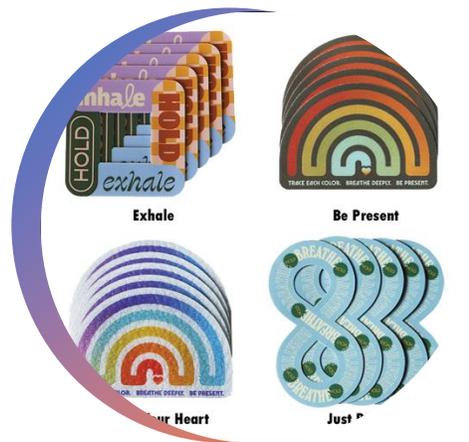


+

•

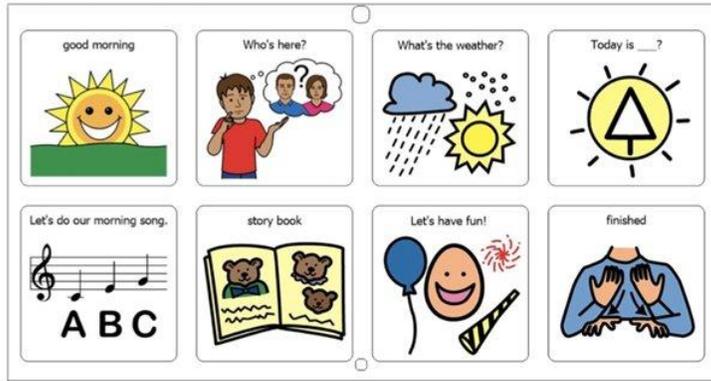
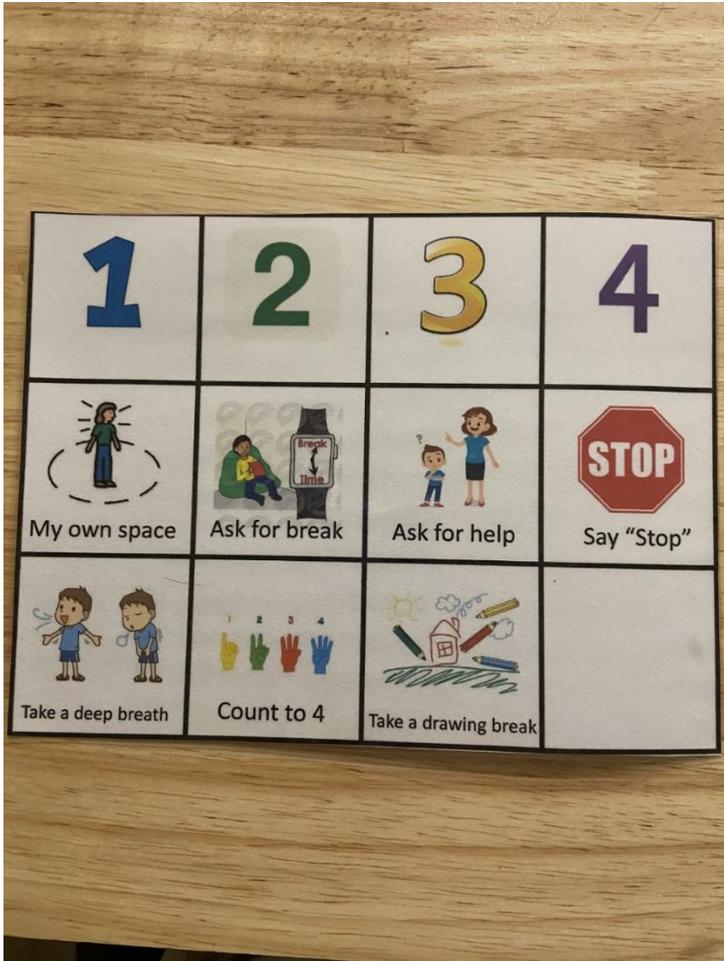


○



Level 1 Breaks

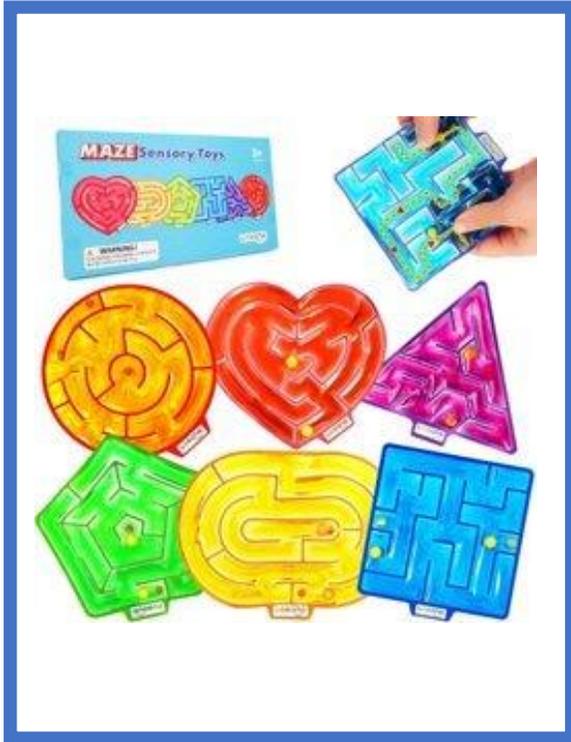
- Movement or input "break" to support staying engaged in a routine or activity
- Can include sensory and regulation input, visual support reminders and changes to the environment





Level 2 Breaks

- Attention Breaks to allow the child to stay within the routine but to move their attention off the activity
- May include engaging in their own activity (drawing on a piece of paper, seeking movement or sensory input without engaging, allowing them to 'reset' to re-engage when ready)





Level 3 Breaks

- A break within the classroom space, but away from the activity or expectation
- This could include a movement break, heavy work, a cozy corner or an activity station
- The child does not have an expectation to stay engaged in the activity, but may return to it after the break





Creating a Break Space

- ***The child can come and go as they desire***
- ***Needs to be modelled and taught to children***
- ***Encourage proactive use rather than reactive use***



Level 4 Breaks

- Take place outside of the classroom
- Can be a walk or movement break or a transition to an alternate space (e.g. *sensory room, breakout room, gym space...*)
- Supports regulation, the returning to learning space





Safe Management Group

Your path to a safer workplace

SMG stance

- Supports regulation and safety

SMG movements

- Acknowledges the need for space
- Promotes safety

As regulation changes,
so does our response

- Match their regulation
- Use Relationship Principles



Further information or inquiry for SMG Training:
Smg@childrensautism.ca



Executive Functioning



Executive functioning is the ability to manage our thinking, behaviour, and emotions to meet demands of a situation.

Executive Functioning: What Changes Under Stress

EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONING IS STATE-DEPENDENT, NOT A FIXED SKILL

```
graph TD; A[EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONING IS STATE-DEPENDENT, NOT A FIXED SKILL] --> B[STRESS REDUCES ACCESS TO PLANNING, MEMORY, FLEXIBILITY, AND CONTROL]; B --> C[INCONSISTENCY REFLECTS NERVOUS SYSTEM LOAD, NOT MOTIVATION];
```

STRESS REDUCES ACCESS TO PLANNING, MEMORY, FLEXIBILITY, AND CONTROL

INCONSISTENCY REFLECTS NERVOUS SYSTEM LOAD, NOT MOTIVATION



Initiation

- ✓ Avoid
- ✓ Shut Down
- ✓ Feel Frozen



Cognitive Flexibility

- Over-Focus
- Get Stuck
- Feel Upset



Working Memory

- Forget
- Feel overwhelmed
- Shut Down



Impulse Control

- Shout Out
- Bolt
- Act without thinking

Task Initiation: When Starting Feels Impossible

Avoidance, freezing, or repeated questions



Often mistaken for refusal or laziness



Initiation requires emotional safety and clarity



Task Initiation: What Actually Helps

Make

- Make the first step unmistakable

Reduce

- Reduce language to one sentence

Start

- Start together, then fade support

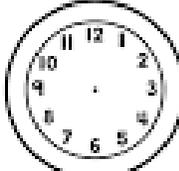
Offer

- Offer entry choices and time-based starts



Get Jobs done

plan backwards
to execute forwards

Get ready	DO	Done
		Get Done
		

inspired from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3j8j8j8j8j>

Session Schedule	
Plan	Completed
●	 book
●	 coloring
 put	●
 clean up	●



Flexibility and Transitions



Change increases stress
and threat



Transitions stack
executive demands



Most incidents happen
between tasks

Flexibility and Transition: Classroom Supports

Predictable	Predictability before flexibility
Slow	Slow transitions down
Visual	Make time and change visible
Regulated	Carry regulation through transitions
Celebrated	Celebrate recovery, not perfection



Working Memory: Why Instructions Disappear



Working memory collapses quickly under stress



Verbal directions overload capacity



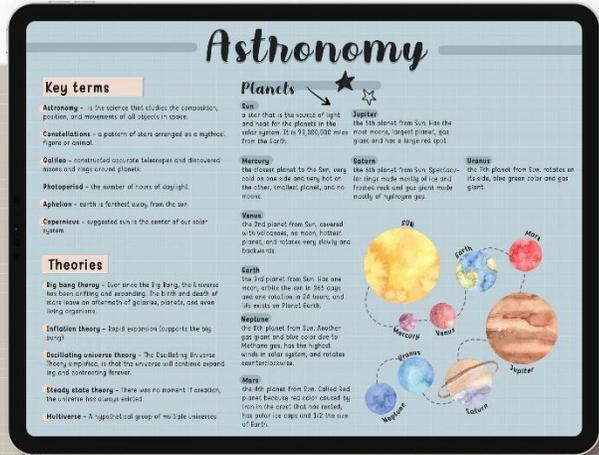
Forgetting is neurological, not defiant

Working Memory: Classroom Supports

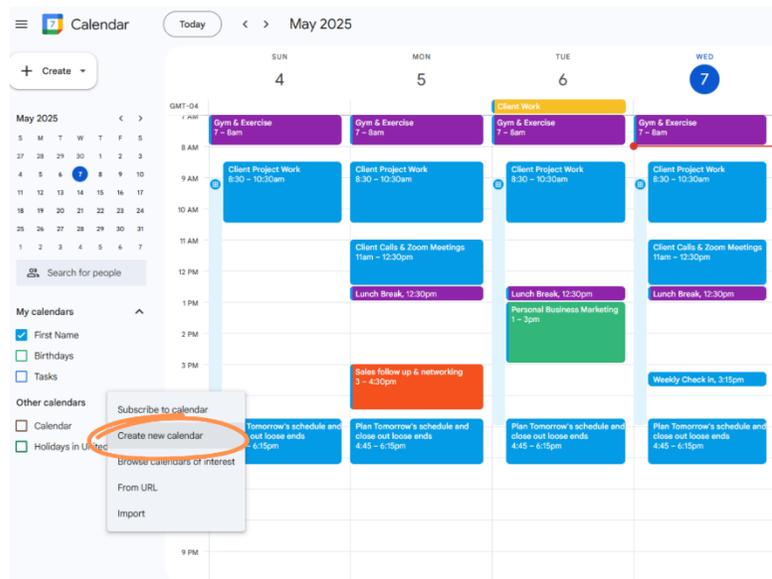
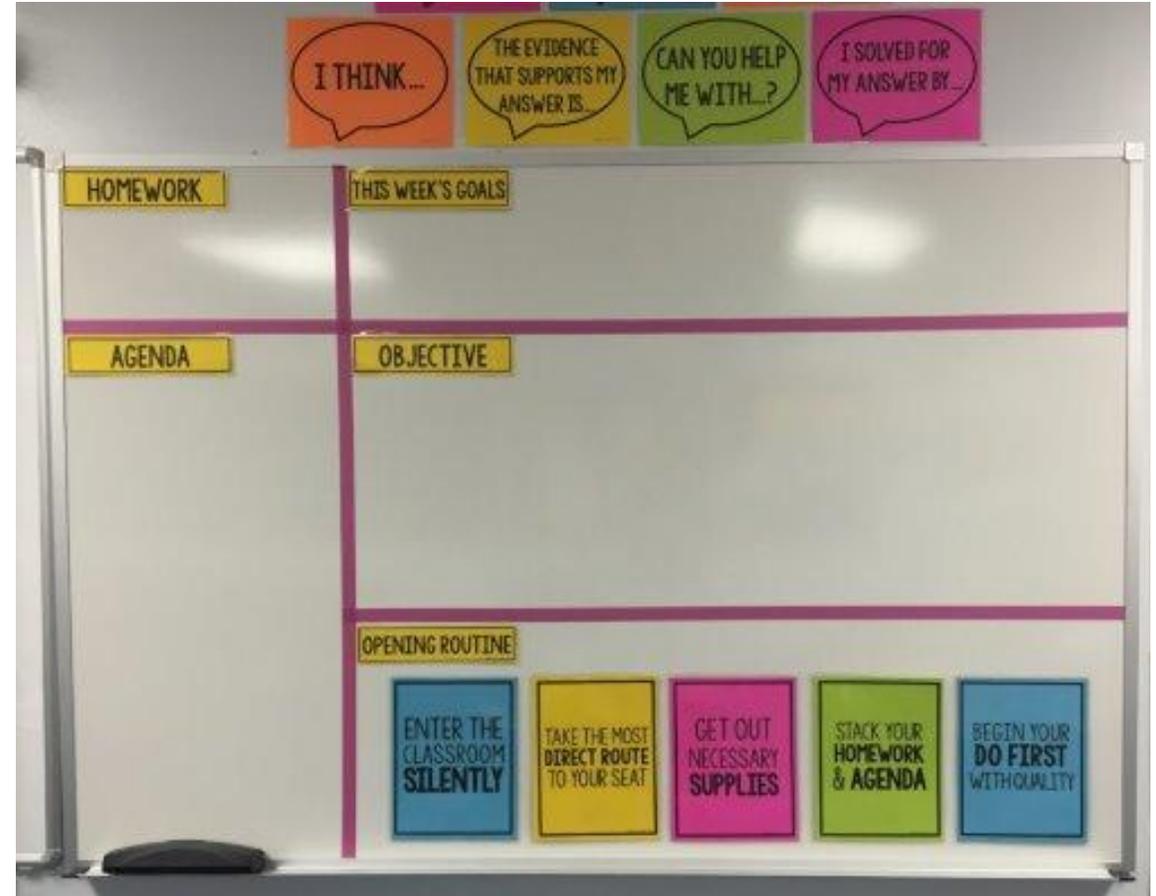
Externalize	Externalize information with visuals
Use	Use now/next boards and visible checklists
Give	Give one step at a time
Model	Model instead of explain

DIGITAL NOTE TEMPLATES

300dpi high resolution | 12 spring color papers | 15 templates per color



©VORVOR/DIGITALHUB | www.digitallhub.com



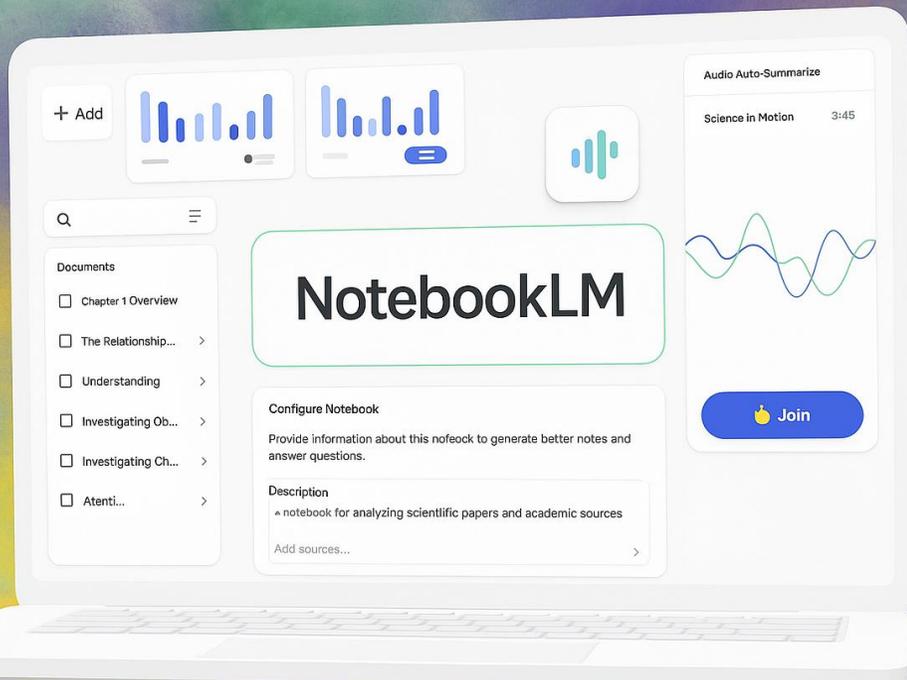
Impulse Control Inhibition

Impulse control
drops when
regulation drops

```
graph TD; A[Impulse control drops when regulation drops] --> B[Impulsivity is often labeled as a behaviour problem]; B --> C[Provide supports and pro-active strategies, not punishment!]
```

Impulsivity is often
labeled as a
behaviour problem

Provide supports and
pro-active strategies,
not punishment!



Executive Functioning Supports-Middle and High School

- Explore the use of technology
 - Google Read&Write
 - Online Calendar (reminders, priorities, check lists, planning)
 - Flipgrid, Podcasts, Video projects, Notebook LM
 - Notetaking Apps (Notability, Good Note)
- Using MagicSchool or ChatGPT:
 - Simplify or enrich a text
 - Adjust reading levels
 - Rephrase instructions
 - Create scaffolded versions or extension challenges
 - Consider prompts that outline Connecting, Processing and Translating activities





A dysregulated adult cannot help regulate a dysregulated child

The Adult Nervous System: The Hidden Variable

- Children borrow adult regulation
- Tone, pacing, and presence matter most
- Repair matters more than perfection



What is one small thing you can change next time you are in the classroom that would reduce the ER load on students?

Resources QR Code

<https://childrensautism.ca/2026-conference-attendees-link/>



